

# Character Class

## Lurk -- Stealthy Psionic Killer

by Skip Williams



The lurk from *Complete Psionic* combines stealth, good melee potential, and a taste of psionic power. Lurks excel at the sudden and deadly attack, but they also make effective scouts, pickpockets, or confidence men. With the right mix of skills and psionic powers, a lurk can literally walk and fight unnoticed on the enemy's turf, making him lethal indeed.

### Assets

Lurks enjoy a wealth of abilities that make them deadly foes in melee. They also have psionic powers that make them even more formidable and adaptable. Here's a look at what the class has to offer:

- **Good Weapon Selection:** A lurk can use any simple or martial weapon, which gives him access to some of the best weapons in the game. Lurks have the tools to fight well.
- **Good Reflex and Will Saves:** A lurk uses the best progression for both Reflex and Will saves (see Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). A lurk can avoid or resist most effects that deal damage or assault his mind.
- **Good Skill Points:** A lurk receives 4 skill points per level, which isn't the best in the game but is sufficient to allow a lurk to excel at several tasks. In addition, lurks usually have high Intelligence scores (because Intelligence governs their psionic powers), which gives them even more skill points.
- **Psionic Powers:** A lurk has access to powers that improve his mobility, confound foes' senses, or provide new senses for the lurk. A lurk begins play knowing only one power, but builds up a considerable repertoire of powers as he advances in level.
- **Lurk Augment:** Starting at 1st level, a lurk gains the ability to give one of his melee attacks extra punch. An augmentation can make an attack deal extra damage, disable a foe, remove or bypass impediments to the attack, or provide other enhancements. Using a lurk augment is a swift action. A lurk can use a number of augmentations each day equal to his lurk level plus his Intelligence modifier. The augmentations available to the lurk depend on his level, as shown in the lurk class description. A lurk can improve some augmentations by spending psionic power points. The maximum number of power points the lurk can spend on a single augmentation (or set of augmentations, see below) is equal to his lurk level.
  - At 1st level, a lurk can use one lurk augment at a time. Beginning at 10th level, a lurk can use two augmentations at once. Beginning at 18th level, a lurk can use three augmentations at once. Each augmentation counts against the lurk's daily limit, and any power points the lurk spends on the pair still cannot exceed the lurk's class level.
- **Psionic Sneak Attack:** Starting at 2nd level, a lurk can deliver a sneak attack just like a rogue can provided that the lurk is psionically focused (see the *Expanded Psionic Handbook*,

page 37). At 2nd level, a lurk's psionic sneak attack deals an extra 1d6 points of damage. At 7th level, the psionic sneak attack bonus is +2d6. At 12th level, the bonus is +3d6, and at 17th level, +4d6.

- **Initiative Boost:** Starting at 6th level, a lurk can add his Intelligence modifier to his initiative checks.
- **Evasion:** Starting at 9th level, a lurk can avoid damage from effects that allow Reflex saves. If a successful Reflex save normally reduces damage by half, the lurk takes no damage instead.
- **Slippery Mind:** Starting at 15th level, a lurk can throw off enchantment spells and effects. If the lurk fails a saving throw against an enchantment, he can attempt a second saving throw on the following round.

## Weaknesses

As with everything in the *D&D* game, the lurk's advantages come at a price. Here are a few disadvantages you'll want to be aware of when considering a lurk character:

- **Fairly Low Hit Points:** The lurk's six-sided hit dice produce only a moderate number of hit points, which means a lurk can't take much punishment in combat.
- **Fairly Weak Armor Class:** A lurk can wear light armor and use any kind of shield (except tower shields). A lurk's Armor Class isn't exactly pathetic, but a lurk can expect to take hits when his foes start striking back. The combination of low hit points and low AC can spell death for lurks who get involved in extended battles. The right selection of psionic powers, however, can improve a lurk's physical defenses somewhat.
- **Fairly Weak Attack Bonus:** A lurk's base attack bonus is three points every four levels (see Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). That's a good base attack bonus but not a great one for a fighting character. When facing a really tough opponent, a lurk often has to fall back on his psionic powers to stay in the fight.
- **Poor Fortitude Saves:** Lurks have the worst progression for both Reflex and Will saves (see Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). Lurks aren't so great at shrugging off effects that attack their bodies.
- **Limited Psionic Options:** A lurk begins play with only one psionic power and few or no psionic power points. A lurk gains a single psionic power and a handful of power points at each level beyond 1st. A lurk's psionic powers must be selected from the rather limited lurk power list, which is restricted to powers related to combat and stealth. A lurk can expand his psionic options through the Expanded Knowledge feat, but for the most part, his psionic powers must focus on combat or stealth (or a little of both).

## Playing a Classy Lurk

Here are a few tips for playing a great lurk.

## **Plan on Getting into the Action**

You don't have the Armor Class or hit points to stay in the party's front line for long, but don't plan to skulk in the rear ranks, either. Your lurk augment ability is useful only with melee attacks, so plan to get up close and personal with any foes your group decides to fight. Your psionic sneak attack ability depends on your ability to strike quickly when the opportunity arises.

## **Develop a Fighting Style**

You're at your best when you can strike quickly while your foes are distracted or unaware of your presence. That leaves you plenty of room to work out your own approach to battle. For example, your fighting style might emphasize speed and mobility (so that you can dash into a battle and really hit the foe where it hurts). To that end, you might choose skills such as Tumble and Jump and a psionic power such as *skate*, *burst*, or *mighty spring*. Your fighting style might emphasize stealth and deception. You can create such a fighting style with skills such as Move Silently, Hide, and Bluff and a power such as *chameleon*, *distract*, or *sensory gloom*.

As you advance in level, choose powers that enhance your fighting style or give you new capabilities. For example, if you've emphasized speed, powers such as *body equilibrium* and *psionic dimension door* can work well for you. You can give yourself new combat options, however, with powers such as *evade attack*, *touchsight*, and *steadfast perception*.

## **Use Your Psionic Potential Quickly and Aggressively**

Your fairly limited psionic reserve may tempt you to hold back, but powers you don't manifest won't help you or your party. You don't need to burn through all your power points during the first few encounters every adventure, but don't take a beating when using a power can make things easier. Likewise, it usually requires a standard action to manifest a power. Once a fight begins, you might not have a standard action to spare (though you can spend extra power points to manifest some powers as swift actions), so it usually pays to manifest your powers when a battle begins or even before it begins if you can anticipate the encounter.

## **Be Flexible**

While it's a great idea to develop a fighting style, keep in mind that you can fill several different roles in a party, especially once you gain a few levels and build up your repertoire of psionic powers and ranks in varied skills. Depending on what skills and powers you select, you could serve as your party's scout, probing ahead for hidden dangers, act as your group's chief negotiator, or find ways to defeat obstacles in your group's path. In time, you could fill a combination of these roles.

Even if you wind up spending most of your time fighting, remaining flexible can pay dividends for you and your group. When traveling with your group, consider a position near the center of the marching order. From there, you're protected from sudden assaults, and you can move to meet threats to the party's front or rear. You can't always know what tricks and stratagems will work in a given situation, so always try to have a backup plan whenever you head into danger.

Likewise, avoid anything that limits your options in the future. Finally, remember that escape is often the best option when things go wrong -- always have a plan for getting yourself out of whatever you've gotten into.

### **Weigh Your Risks**

While it usually pays for a lurk to be bold, be aware of getting into trouble that you can't handle. Above all, avoid taking unnecessary chances or doing things that put the rest of the party in danger. You might have the ability to slink on ahead of the party or deal a devastating blow to a key foe, but don't try to do so unless you have a pretty good idea of what you stand to gain if you succeed. If the benefits you can expect from your intended action don't outweigh the risks, think up something else to do.

### **Remember Your Friends**

You'll be at your best when you can balance your fighting ability, psionic power, and fairly low hit points, and that's easiest to achieve with help from your allies.

**Fighting Allies:** Characters such as barbarians and fighters have more hit points, a slightly better attack bonus, and better Armor Class than you have. You might be tempted to leave the bulk of the combat chores to such allies. This isn't always a bad thing, especially when you need time to manifest a power or two to get into fighting trim.

Remember, however, that you're a fighting character, too. Don't hang back too long when a fight breaks out. When you join a fight, keep track of what your fighting allies are doing. Do your utmost to make sure those allies don't become surrounded or flanked, and look for opportunities to flank opponents yourself. Try to gauge the opposition. Double up with a fighting ally to defeat powerful opponents quickly. When facing hordes of lesser foes, form a fighting line or ring and engage as many foes as you can. When you're outnumbered, eliminate weaker foes as quickly as you can to limit the number of foes who can attack you.

**Stealthy Allies:** Stealthy characters such as rogues and rangers often need the same kinds of combat support that fighting characters do. If your equipment, skills, and psionic powers permit, be ready to accompany stealthy characters on scouting trips to provide the scout some protection or an extra set of eyes and ears. If you stay behind by choice or by necessity, be ready to go to the scout's rescue when he finds trouble (as characters often do when taking point). Just be careful to avoid whatever fate befell the scout.

**Arcane Spellcasters and Psionicists:** Wizards, sorcerers, psions, and bards can pack a real punch with their spells, and they often serve as the party's heavy artillery. These characters are notoriously vulnerable to physical attacks, thanks to their poor Armor Classes and very low hit points. These characters rely on you to keep the opposition at a distance, and it's in your best interest to do so, even though you're fairly vulnerable yourself.

**Divine Spellcasters:** Get friendly and stay friendly with your party's cleric, druid, or paladin. This character's healing spells can keep you on your feet when you take damage. These

characters usually are fairly capable fighters in addition to their spellcasting ability. Be ready to support them in battle as you would your group's main fighters.

## Some Key Equipment

No matter how carefully you choose your psionic powers, you still must rely on your gear to reach your full potential. The essentials for you include:

- **Primary Melee Weapon:** You'll need a decent martial weapon to make the most of lurk augment powers. If you plan on using a shield, it's hard to beat a longsword or battle axe. A greatsword or great axe is a good choice if you don't plan to use a shield. You might also want to use a bonus feat on an exotic weapon proficiency, such as bastard sword, if you wish to maximize the damage you can deal while using a shield.
  - No matter how you plan to fight, a masterwork weapon is worth the money if you can afford it. If you plan to fight with your primary melee weapon most of the time, a magical weapon is a necessity.
- **Backup Melee Weapon:** It's always a good idea to have a second melee weapon available in case you lose your primary weapon or if your primary weapon proves ineffective. Make sure this weapon deals a different kind of damage from your primary weapon. For example, if you normally use a longsword (a slashing weapon), consider morningstar (which deals both bludgeoning and piercing damage) as a backup.
- **Ranged Weapon:** Your foes won't always oblige you by staying within melee reach, so carry a martial ranged weapon even though your forte is melee. A longbow has good range and deals good damage. If you have a decent Strength score, get a composite longbow that can give you your full Strength bonus on damage.
- **Armor and Shield:** Powers such as *defensive precognition*, *biofeedback*, and *concealing amphora* can boost your defense, but they're no substitute for armor. Buy the best light armor you can afford, and plan to carry a shield unless you really want to use a two-handed weapon. At the beginning of your career, that usually means studded leather armor and a buckler at the least, but move up to a heavy shield as soon as you can afford it. As you advance in level, consider moving up to a chain shirt or mithral armor.
- **Backup Powers:** You're going to run out of power points sooner or later, and without power points, you're nothing special. It's hard to beat a cognizance crystal for keeping a few power points in reserve.
  - A dorje is useful for manifesting powers that you use often, such as *defensive precognition*, *burst*, or *mental barrier*. Best of all, you can use a dorje to manifest any power on the lurk class list even if you don't know the power. Because you don't know too many powers, a dorje expands your psionic options considerably.

---

## About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

---

© 1995-2006 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Based on the original **Dungeons & Dragons**® game by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and on the new edition of the **Dungeons & Dragons** game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison. **D&D**, **Dungeons & Dragons**, and **Forgotten Realms** are registered trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All Wizards characters, character names, and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This material is protected under the laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction of or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This product is a work of fiction. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, places, or events is purely coincidental. This Wizards of the Coast game product contains no Open Game Content. No portion of this work may be reproduced in any form without written permission. To learn more about the Open Gaming License and the d20 System License, please visit [www.wizards.com/d20](http://www.wizards.com/d20). © 2001-2006 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All rights reserved. Made in the U.S.A.

**Visit our website at [www.wizards.com/dnd](http://www.wizards.com/dnd).**